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CERAMIC *UNGUENTARIA* FROM SCALLABIS (SANTARÉM, PORTUGAL)

Archaeological field work carried out in Alcáçova de Santarém (Portugal) during the last two decades of the 20th century have identified a significant amount of data concerning the site's occupation during the Roman period. In this work, we present and analyze a particular type of archaeological materials associated to this phase, the ceramic *unguentaria*. This set is, so far, the largest uncovered in habitat settlements in the Portuguese territory (65 fragments – 30 individuals), encompassing the two main shapes of these vessels (fusiform and bulbous profiles), apparently imported from the Italic Peninsula, between the 2nd century BC and the first half of the 1st century AD.

1. Introduction

Located in a considerably large plateau overlooking the Tagus River, Alcáçova de Santarém holds a strategic position in terms of natural defensibility and visual domain across the surrounding territory, conditions that certainly promoted its intense and uninterrupted human occupation throughout the last three millennia (figs. 1–3). The Roman phase of this occupation is considerably long, dating back to the late 3rd quarter of the 2nd century BCE extending up to the 6th century. During most of this period, the ancient *Scallabis Praesidium Iulium* was an important colony in *Lusitania*, having been the capital of one of its *conventus iuridicus*¹.

The archaeological evidence related with the Roman Republican phase and the first centuries of the first millennium CE recovered in Alcáçova de Santarém is particularly significant. It's urbanism is not, unfortunately, well known, due mostly to the site's strong, dynamic and continuous human occupation. In fact, other than the emblematic temple of *Scallabis*², built during the 1st century BCE, a few other buildings and supporting infrastructures, most of the architectonic elements so far identified correspond to simple housing structures.

The artifacts associated with this period are, nonetheless, quite abundant, gathering several hundred *amphorae* from Italic, African³ and Hispanic production⁴, Pompeian red slip-

ware⁵, campanian ware⁶, thin walled pottery⁷, lamps⁸, glass vases⁹ and significant amounts of terra sigillata¹⁰.

2. The *unguentaria*

Throughout the several archaeological campaigns carried out in Alcáçova de Santarém between 1983 and 2000 were uncovered 65 fragments of Roman ceramic *unguentaria*, imported from the Italic peninsula. It is important to remember that the totality of the archaeological layers attributed to the Roman chronological phases are related with public and residential environments, a factor that explains the advanced state of fragmentation of the materials analyzed in this paper. Therefore, most of the pieces correspond to undifferentiated wall fragments that we could assign to ceramic *unguentaria* due to the presence of the typical glazed coating in the internal surfaces.

The diagnostic fragments correspond to almost half of the set (30 individuals) (fig. 4). Unfortunately, its level of fragmentation makes it difficult to identify the exact typological classification, considering that it's the conjunction of the morphology of the rim, general profile and base that enables a specific division and recognition of the ceramic *unguentaria* variants. Regarding the typology used in the

¹ A. M. ARRUDA, Los fenicios en Portugal: Fenicios y mundo indígena en el centro y sur de Portugal (Barcelona 1999–2000); ARRUDA/VIEGAS 1999; ARRUDA 1999–2000; VIEGAS 2003.

² ARRUDA/VIEGAS 1999.

³ A. M. ARRUDA/R. ALMEIDA, As importações de vinho itálico para o território actualmente português, cronologias e significado. In: *Économie et territoire en Lusitanie romaine* (Madrid 1999) 307–337; R. ALMEIDA/A. M. ARRUDA, As ânforas de tipo Maña C em Portugal. In: *Ati del V Congreso Internazionale di Studi Fenici i Punici* (Palermo 2005) 1319–1329; BARGÃO 2006.

⁴ R. ALMEIDA/A. M. ARRUDA, Importação e consumo de vinho bético na Colónia romana de Scallabis (Santarém, Portugal). In: *Ex Baetica Amphorae Conservas, aceite y vino de la Bética en el Imperio romano*

(Sevilla 2001) 703–716; A. M. ARRUDA/C. VIEGAS/P. BARGÃO, As ânforas da Bética costeira na Alcáçova de Santarém. *Rev. Portuguesa Arqu.* 8/1, 2005, 279–297; A. M. ARRUDA/C. VIEGAS/P. BARGÃO, Ânforas lusitanas da Alcáçova de Santarém. *Setúbal Arqu.* 13, 2006, 233–278; ALMEIDA 2008.

⁵ A. M. ARRUDA/C. VIEGAS, A cerâmica de Engobe Vermelho Pompeiano na Alcáçova de Santarém. *Rev. Portuguesa Arqu.* 5/1, 2002, 221–238.

⁶ V. SORIA, A cerâmica de mesa em época tardo republicana em Scallabis: o contributo da campaniense. In: *Actas do II Congresso Internacional da SECAH* (Cádiz 2013) 249–269.

⁷ ARRUDA/SOUSA 2003.

⁸ C. PEREIRA, *Roman Lamps of Scallabis* (Santarém, Portugal) (Oxford 2014).

⁹ ANTUNES 2000.

¹⁰ VIEGAS 2003.

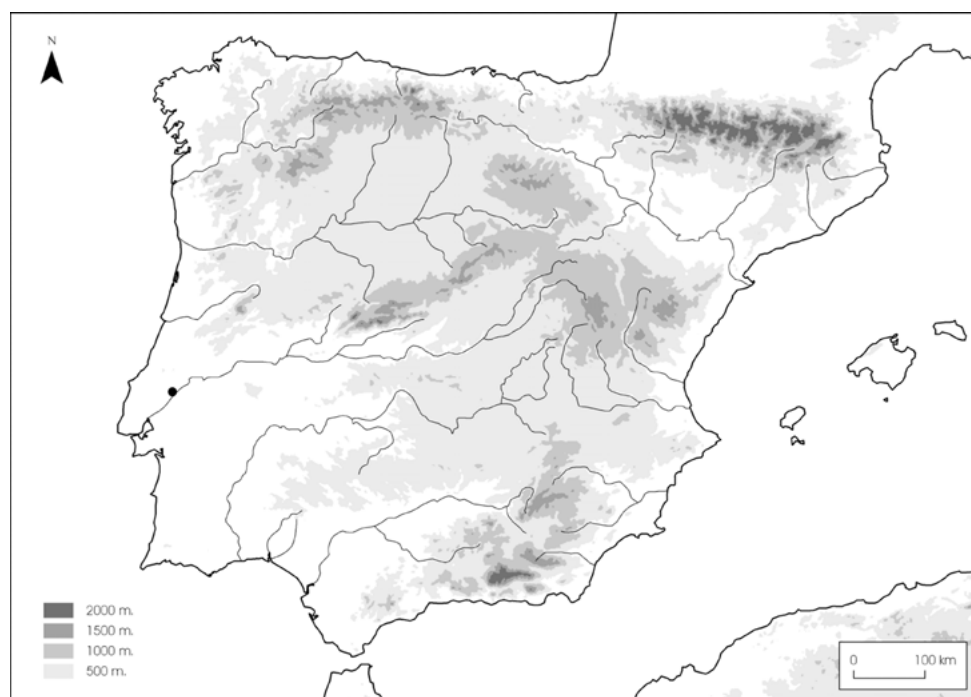


Fig. 1. Location of Santarém in the Iberian Peninsula.

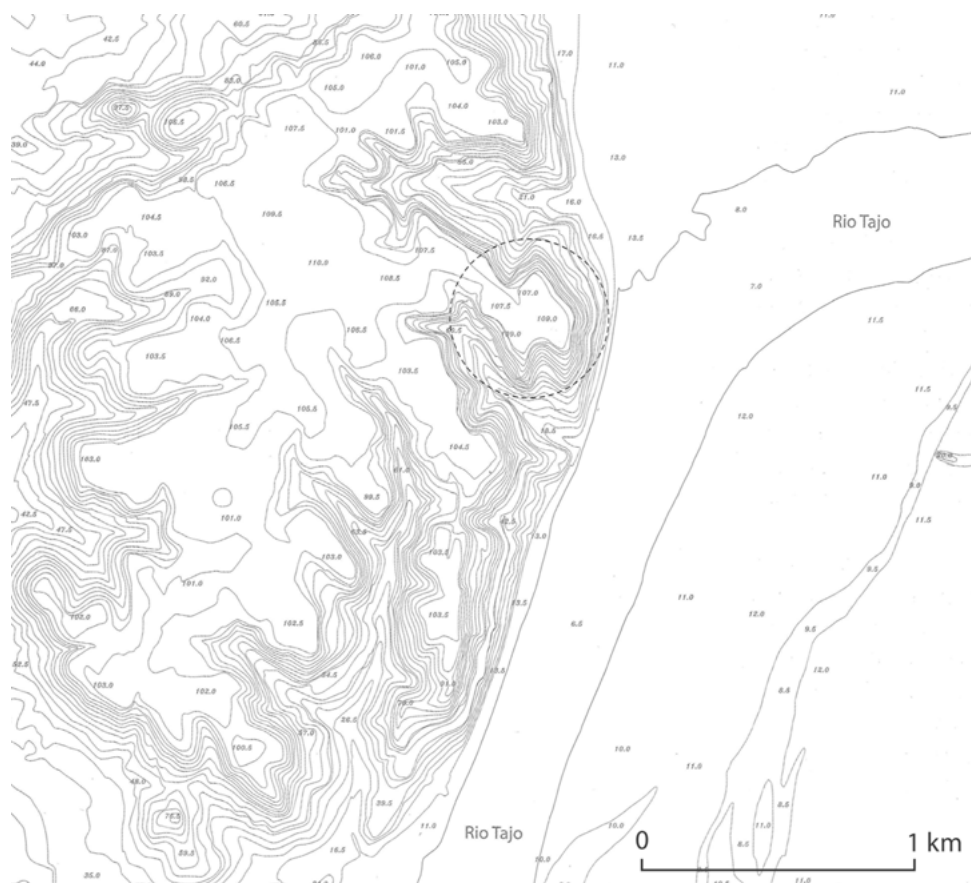


Fig. 2. The plateau of Alcáçova de Santarém (cartographic base from the authors).



Fig. 3. Alcáçova de Santarém view from the Tagus.

classification of the fragments, we used primarily the work published by M. Py¹¹ that provides a broad framework for distinguishing the morphological variants, as well as an updated chronological revise.

Only two fragments uncovered in the Alcáçova de Santarém's excavations correspond to rim elements (n° 1 and 2), presenting a diameter of 3 and 2 cms, respectively. Both of them exhibit a rounded section and a long narrow neck, a feature shared by some variants of type B *unguentaria* (specifically type B4), but that prevails in the type D vessels (types D2 and D3)¹². As a matter of fact, in the *necropolis* of Rua dos Correios, in Lisbon, in use during the last decades of the 1st century BCE and the first half of the 1st century CE¹³, most part of the recovered *unguentaria*, classified according to Py's type D, exhibit the same morphological features as the two rims from Alcáçova de Santarém.

On the other hand, the type D *unguentaria* is clearly documented in the set recovered in Alcáçova de Santarém by a group of five flat base fragments that develop into a bulbous inferior profile, a feature shared by the variants D1, D2 and D3¹⁴, which were popular between the mid 1st century BCE and the late 1st century CE.

All the other fragments of *unguentaria* bases of this set are easily integrated in M. Py's type B, characterized by a fusiform shape and a long and solid foot.

The inferior part of the reservoir area of most artifacts (n° 14 to 22) exhibits a marked conic profile, a feature present in types B3 to B7, B9 and B10, dated between the 2nd century BCE and used until the end of the millennium, although in some cases (types B9 and B10) this range may be extended to the mid 1st century CE¹⁵.

Most of the foot fragments (n° 23, 25–27, 29–30) exhibit a profile similar to the ones presented in types B2, B3 and

B5, produced mainly during the 2nd century and the first quarter of the 1st century BCE. In two other cases (n° 24 and 28), the presence of a molded foot allows an equivalence to type B6, used during the 2nd and 1st century BCE. One other fragment (n° 13), with an everted base, corresponds, without a doubt, to type B8, produced between the mid 2nd and the mid 1st century BCE¹⁶.

Finally, three fragments of the neck and the superior part of the reservoir area (n° 5–7) may belong either to types B or D established by Michel Py. However, a small observation can be made concerning one of these pieces (n° 5) considering that it exhibits a wider neck diameter when compared with the other pieces. It is not impossible that it may belong to a large sized *unguentarium*, similar to the ones found in Arles, Pompeya and in the area of *Valentia*¹⁷. Concerning this issue, it is important also to amend the classification of a fragment recovered in Monte Molião¹⁸, which was initially classified as an *askos*, but whose profile and presence of a reddish glazed coating in the inner surface may now be related with these large sized *unguentaria*.

The macroscopic characteristics of the clay are practically identical in all the fragments uncovered in Alcáçova de Santarém. It's an overall good production, with fairly thin clay and smooth surfaces. Its close similarity to most of the fabrics identified in the set of Republican thin walled vases uncovered in the site¹⁹, imported from the Italic peninsula, seems to favor identical production areas.

In the majority of the cases, the interior of these vases is covered with a dark or reddish coating applied probably to ensure the impermeability of its surfaces and its capacity as a retainer. In the outer surface we have also observed, in some cases, the application of horizontal decorative stripes, in tones of red or black, usually with a metallic sheen (fig. 5).

¹¹ PY 1993.

¹² PY 1993.

¹³ BUGALHÃO ET AL. 2013, 269.

¹⁴ PY 1993.

¹⁵ PY 1993.

¹⁶ PY 1993.

¹⁷ HUGUET ENGUITA/RIBERA I LACOMBA 2013, 195.

¹⁸ SOUSA/ARRUDA 2014, fig. 15,12135.

¹⁹ ARRUDA/SOUSA 2003.

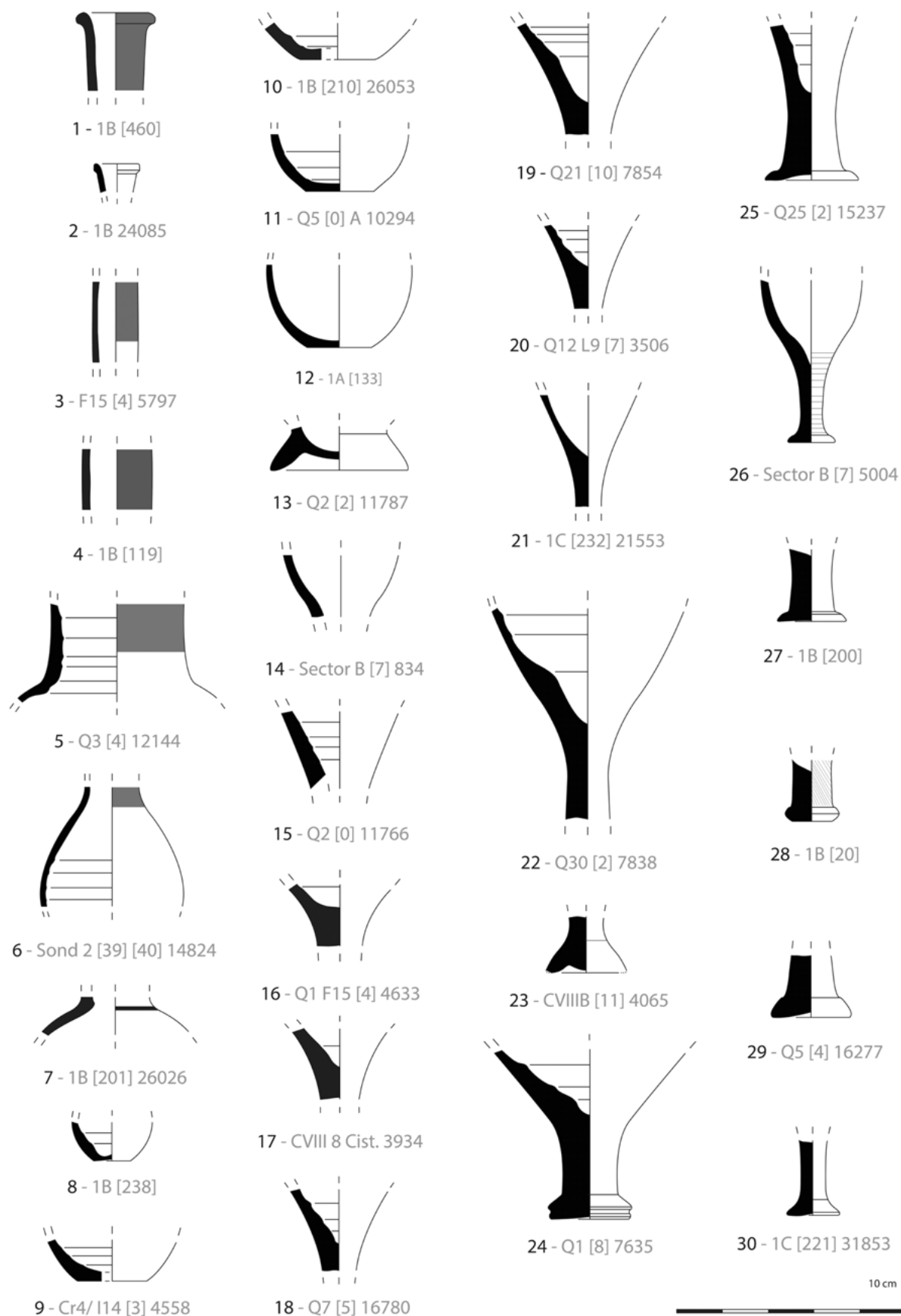


Fig. 4. Ceramic *unguentaria* from Alcáçova de Santarém.



Fig. 5. Ceramic *unguentaria* from Alcáçova de Santarém (photo).

3. Archaeological Contexts and Chronology

Due to Alcáçova de Santarém's intense human occupation, the primary association of the ceramic *unguentaria* to their original archaeological contexts is rare. Most part of this set was recovered in secondary layers, resulting from latest constructions undertaken during the site's Islamic, Medieval and Modern phases, which affected and frequently destroyed the Roman stratigraphy.

Nonetheless, a small number of fragments were retrieved in their original contexts, being associated with other materials that provide a more specific chronological framework, specifically in the case of the fusiform shaped *unguentaria*. Some of these fragments (n° 14, 18, 26, 29, 30) were uncovered in layers dating from the 1st century BCE, associated with italic Dressel 1 amphorae, Maña C2b, Campania ware (type A, B and Cales productions) and republican thin walled vases²⁰. The use of this type is, nonetheless, also documented in more recent phases, dating from the last decades of the 1st century BCE and to the Augustus reign (n° 16, 18, 20, 22), in association with Dressel 7–11 and Haltern 70 amphorae and italic *terra sigillata* (Conspectus 22 or 23, 24), and even until the late 1st century CE (n° 27)²¹. So far, these fusiform *unguentaria* do not appear in the most ancient Roman occupation phase, dating to the late 2nd century BCE, although this situation may be related with the shortage of the respective archaeological contexts.

As for the bulbous shaped *unguentaria*, only two fragments were recovered in preserved contexts. The oldest (n° 8) was retrieved in a phase dated from the late 1st century BCE until the late 1st century CE while the other, a rim fragment (n° 1), came from within a layer dated between the late 1st century and the mid 2nd century CE, in association with italic and south-gaulish *terra sigillata*²².

4. Conclusion

Although the *unguentaria* is a type of recipient used primarily in funerary contexts²³, its presence in habitat areas is also relatively well documented. Its use was probably linked directly with cosmetic and sumptuary functions, as containers for specific and valuable liquids or viscous substances such as perfume oils or unguents, or even for some types of alimentary products (honey, fish sauce, vinegar, wine, etc.), although its use as a recipient for powdered or granular substances (incense, powder cosmetics) is also a possibility²⁴.

The types documented in the set uncovered in Alcáçova de Santarém are a testimony of the daily use of these vases during the Republican period and the early phases of the Empire (mid – late 1st century CE), a moment after which the ceramic *unguentaria* seems to have been systematically replaced by its glass reproductions²⁵, relatively well documented in the site²⁶.

In terms of morphological features, we were able to identify two of the most common shapes of this kind of recipients²⁷. The most ancient, Michel Py's type B, equivalent to type Oberaden 28 or Vegas 63-a, with a fusiform profile, long tubular neck and a considerable high foot, is the most popular morphology in use during the Roman Republican period (2nd–1st century BCE), although its appearance in the early principate is not entirely unknown. On the other hand, Py's type D seems to appear only in the second half of the 1st century BCE, disappearing in the late stages of the following century, due to the success of the glass manufactures²⁸.

²⁰ ARRUDA/SOUSA 2003; VIEGAS 2003; BARGÃO 2006; ALMEIDA 2008.

²¹ VIEGAS 2003; ALMEIDA 2008.

²² ALMEIDA 2008, 263, 265.

²³ ANDERSON-STOJANOVIC 1987.

²⁴ ANDERSON-STOJANOVIC 1987, 115–116; CAMILLI 1999, 31.

²⁵ ANDERSON-STOJANOVIC, 1987, 113.

²⁶ ANTUNES, 2000.

²⁷ ANDERSON-STOJANOVIC 1987: 106; HUGUET ENGUITA/RIBERA I LACOMBA 2013, 194.

²⁸ ANDERSON-STOJANOVIC 1987; CAMILLI 1999; PY 1993.

This general evolution seems to be well documented in the Tagus region, considering that in the Roman *necropolis* of Rua dos Correeiros (Lisbon), used during the last decades of the 1st century BCE and the first half of the 1st century CE²⁹, only the latest type (type D) was documented, suggesting that the fusiform shaped *unguentaria* were no longer popular during this period. This specific situation may be, nonetheless, related with some sort of selective procedure in the context of regional funerary practices, considering that the use of fusiform shaped *unguentaria* is well documented in Alcáçova de Santarém during that time. The association of fusiform and bulbous shaped *unguentaria* is also registered in Southern Portugal, in ancient Balsa's funerary area, used also during part of this period (late 1st century BCE – 1st century CE), although, in this case, the bulbous shaped *unguentaria* are predominant³⁰.

The fusiform shaped *unguentaria* are considerably rare in the Portuguese territory, although this may be attributed to the lack of specific studies carried on upon this type of containers. So far, only a few artifacts can be safely attributed to this type. One of them was recovered in the area of Castelo de São Jorge, in Lisbon³¹, also of Italic origin. A small set of this type of *unguentaria* was also identified in Monte Molião (Lagos – Algarve), in Southern Portugal. Some of these artifacts were recovered in Roman Republican layers, dated between the late 2nd century and the early 1st century BCE, most of which produced in the Cadiz area³², but at least a few others are of Italic origin. Other fragments were uncovered in latter phases (1st and 2nd century CE), produced both in Italy and in Cadiz. From the

interior (Alentejo) we know two other cases, one from Mesas do Castelinho and the other, in (regional?) grey ware, from Cabeço de Vaia³³. The last two fusiform *unguentaria* were recovered, as already stated, in Balsa's funerary area, integrating latter variants³⁴.

The bulbous shaped containers are also documented in Western Iberia. Its presence is particularly significant in funerary contexts, such as in the abovementioned *necropolis* located in Rua dos Correeiros, in Lisbon³⁵ and also in Balsa's *necropolis*³⁶. However, in *habitat* settlements this type appears, so far, only in Conimbriga³⁷ and in Alcácer do Sal³⁸.

The set of ceramic *unguentaria* recovered in Alcáçova de Santarém is, so far, the largest in the Portuguese territory. Although this situation may be related with the lack of specific studies concerning this type of vessels in the region, it may also be an indicator of the importance of ancient *Scallabis* during the Roman period. The significant presence of the fusiform types in the site is surely related with its strong economic and commercial capacity during the Republican phase that extends over the late 1st century BCE/ early 1st century CE, with the import of a new type, the bulbous shaped *unguentaria*. The presence of these vessels may also be interpreted as an indicator of the dynamic absorption of Roman daily cultural and social practices that encompassed the consumption of valuable substances, either alimentary or sumptuary. A situation already documented through others Italic imports, manufactured (thin wall vases, Pompeian red slip ware, Campania ware and *terra sigillata*) and also alimentary (Greco-italic and Dressel 1 amphorae containing wine).

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²⁹ BUGALHÃO ET AL. 2013, 269.

³⁰ NOLEN 1994; PEREIRA 2015.

³¹ N. MOTA/J. PIMENTA/R. B. SILVA, *Acerca da ocupação romana republicana de Olisipo: os dados da intervenção na Rua do Recolhimento n.ºs 68–70*. *Cira-Arqueologia* 3, 2015, 149–177.

³² SOUSA/ARRUDA 2014, 66.

³³ C. FABIÃO, *O mundo indígena e a sua romanização na área céltica do território português* (PhD dissertation Univ. Lisbon, published in photocopy 1999) 338 fig. 93,8; 112,2.

³⁴ NOLEN 1994, 146; PEREIRA 2015.

³⁵ BUGALHÃO ET AL. 2013.

³⁶ NOLEN 1994, 146; PEREIRA 2015.

³⁷ J. ALARCÃO/R. ETIENNE, *Fouilles de Conimbriga VI. Céramiques diverses et verres* (Paris 1976) 74; 137 n.º 46, 46A.

³⁸ E. SEPÚLVEDA/E. M. SOUSA/J. C. FARIA/M. FERREIRA, *Cerâmicas romanas do lado ocidental do castelo de Alcácer do Sal, 3: paredes finas, pasta depurada, engobe vermelho pompeiano e lucernas*. *Rev. Portuguesa Arqu.* 6/2, 2003, 383–399.

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